

ALTERNATIVE E

OVERALL CONCEPT

Most facilities would remain and services would continue, but a few changes would be made to better separate uses and increase interpretation. To provide better quality experiences without restricting activities, visitor numbers would be controlled at substantially lower levels than exist now. According to visitor feedback, most congestion and user conflicts take place between late July and late August. Based on preliminary analysis of use levels during these times, visitation would have to be reduced to about 10,000–13,000 people per year in order to avoid most conflicts. This would mean that approximately 5,000–8,000 fewer visitors per year would be accommodated than in recent years.

Visitation to the island would be managed through a reservation system. A limited number of permits could be issued per year on a first-come, first-served basis, or there could be a lottery system or some other method. Various reservation systems would be carefully evaluated before one was chosen.

Interpreted sites would remain, and historic structures at Wright Island, Crystal Cove, and Fishermans Home could be adaptively used for additional interpretation of park cultural themes. Interpretation and environmental education could be provided at the west end of the park at Washington and Barnum Islands. The Rock Harbor and Windigo areas would remain the primary visitor orientation points.

Historic structures and landscapes would be preserved in priority order according to significance. The historic commercial fishery sites at Wright Island, Crystal Cove, and Fishermans Home would be stabilized and adaptive uses would be sought to provide for their continued preservation and interpretation. When the National Park Service receives title to the lighthouses owned by the U.S. Coast Guard

(such as Passage Island Lighthouse), partners interested in preserving the structures would be considered.

PARK MANAGEMENT ZONING

NPS operations would remain at Rock Harbor, Mott Island, and Windigo. Ranger stations at Amygdaloid Island and Malone Bay would also remain.

The **developed zones** at Rock Harbor and Windigo would remain as they are. Ferries would continue to serve Rock Harbor, Windigo, and secondary stops such as McCargoe Cove and Malone Bay. Water taxi service to intermediate stops would also continue as demand warranted.

Day hiking and interpretation opportunities would be emphasized in **frontcountry zones**.

The **wilderness portal zones** would include five sites. These areas would continue to serve as secondary ferry stops and would be entryways into the backcountry.

Most trails and campgrounds would be **zoned as backcountry**. Modifications would be made in three backcountry zone areas to help separate motorized and nonmotorized uses at these popular sites. Actions to implement this concept would include:

- relocating the dock to the mouth of McCargoe Cove, where a new boater campground would be added, which would reduce noise and traffic at the head of the cove. The campground at the head of the cove would remain for use by hikers and paddlers.
- relocating hiker campsites away from the dock area at Siskiwit Bay, leaving sites near the dock for motor boaters

- relocating campsites for nonmotorized users at Chippewa Campground further into the cove

Cross-country wilderness experiences would continue to be provided in **pristine zones**.

Consistent with the concept of providing visitors maximum freedom to experience and enjoy the island, there would be no areas **zoned primitive, quiet/no-wake, or nonmotorized waters** in this alternative.

CONCESSIONS SERVICES

Ferries would continue to serve Rock Harbor, Windigo, and secondary stops such as McCargoe Cove and Malone Bay. Water taxi service to intermediate stops would also continue as demand warranted. Concession services at Rock Harbor (motel and house-keeping units, restaurant and snack bar, marina, boat rentals, fuel sales, store) and Windigo (store, boat rentals, fuel sales) would remain.

It is not likely that any combination of overnight and food services at Rock Harbor could continue to be offered without financial subsidy to provide utilities to the concessioner (see Appendix C). This conclusion was based on the *Concession Feasibility Analysis, Isle Royale National Park*, that was prepared for Rock Harbor. The study takes into consideration the high cost of utilities on the island and the relatively low number of visitors using the concession's overnight accommodations. Without subsidy, the cost of providing lodging and food services could continue to drive up prices to a level that few visitors would be willing or able to pay (which already appears to be happening). This could result in the elimination of overnight and food services at Rock Harbor.

The concessioner would need to be subsidized through a congressional appropriation to the park. It would have to be sufficient to cover both capital costs related to backlogged utility and infrastructure upgrades and annual operating costs of supplying utilities to the concessioner in

excess of the cost of comparables (the difference between utility costs on the mainland and costs at the park). This subsidy is estimated at a minimum of \$2.1 million for the backlogged utility and infrastructure capital improvement needs and a minimum of \$400,000 per year, plus annual consumer price index increases to keep the subsidy current. This subsidy would allow a reduction in costs of rooms, meals, and all other goods and services which would make concessioner services more affordable for the visitor. If this subsidy is not received, costs for the visitor will continue to escalate, resulting in services not being affordable for most park visitors.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Priorities would include limiting use levels through a reservation system and upgrading utilities and infrastructure at Rock Harbor. Other actions would follow.

Over and above alternative A (no action) costs, alternative E construction costs are estimated at \$241,800. Additional research, inventory, and monitoring costs are estimated at \$2,130,000 (one-time) and \$10,000 annually. An additional annual appropriation of approximately \$400,000 would be necessary to subsidize the concession operation at Rock Harbor (see Appendix B for details).